

Disability services guide

for Helsinki residents

The logo for Helsinki, featuring the word "Helsinki" in a bold, sans-serif font, enclosed within a black outline of a speech bubble or a similar shape with a pointed bottom.

Helsinki

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More information online.

1. Disability services guidebook for Helsinki residents

This guidebook contains the central disability services in Helsinki. A range of disability services and support measures promote the independence and everyday life management of people with disabilities and intellectual disabilities wherein the aim is to reduce the hindrances a disability may cause in a person's everyday life. More information and application forms

<https://www.hel.fi/vammaiset/en>

<https://www.hel.fi/vammaiset/fi/lomakkeet>

2. Legal definition of the services

The Act on Disability Services and Assistance determines the services and financial support measures with which municipality can provide a disabled person on the basis of the Act.

Persons who have disabilities or struggle, in the long term and due to an illness, to manage the normal activities in their everyday lives are entitled to the services and support measures pursuant to the Act on Disability Services and Assistance. These services and support measures will be provided if a disabled person cannot, on the basis of other legislation, get services that are adequate and appropriate for them.

Some of the services and support measures referred to in the Act on Disability Services and Assistance fall under the provision obligation municipalities have. Severely disabled people have a subjective right to these services. Some of the services and support measures referred to in the Act on Disability Services and Assistance are tied to appropriations and the municipality can determine how they shall be allocated.

Disabled people can also apply for the disabled people's special services determined in the legislation concerning the special care for disabled people.

On the basis of the Social Welfare Act, support for living and employment can also be provided.

3. Applying for a service

Services intended for people with disabilities are applied for at the location in your residential area providing social work for disabled people. The contact details are listed at the end of the guidebook.

The applicant's income or wealth shall not be taken into account when granting the services; the starting point is always the need for services and the

hindrance the disability or chronic illness causes for the person's everyday life. Services can be applied for year-round.

You can discuss with a social worker the need for assistance and support the disability or illness causes for living, moving and managing the everyday life at home. Social workers are experts in the provision of the services based on the Act on Disability Services and Assistance and the Act on Special Care for People with Intellectual Disabilities. Cooperation is implemented with bodies such as home care, home service for families with children, hospitalities and organisations. Disabled people's healthcare, medical rehabilitation and home care are part of the health care services.

Services aimed at families with children include home service and social guidance. Home service is temporary work performed to support the everyday life of a family and it can be granted on the basis of a reduced ability to act, family situation, stress, birth, disability or other reason. Social guidance for families with children is intended for families with children aged 0–16 and it includes support, guidance and counselling for different life situations and questions related to parenthood and raising children. More information about the services for families with children in Helsinki is available at www.perheentuki.fi.

The disabled person will be drafted a customer plan in which their overall situation is assessed, their goals are set and their services and the responsible persons are agreed. This is all done together with the disabled person. Monitoring and assessment are also part of the customer plan.

4. Services for severely disabled persons

The services and support measures intended for severely disabled people are included in the special provision obligation of municipalities. They include the following services:

4.1 Transport services

Transport services are intended for severely disabled people for whom using the public transport is unreasonably difficult. Transport services can also be applied for in cases of commute (both work and school) and travelling for errands or leisure.

A customer for whom the municipality has decided to grant the transport services shall be given a personal transport service payment card with which they can pay for the trips. The customer shall pay a customer's responsibility for the trips.

The payment card can be used for transport in Helsinki and the neighbouring municipalities. Work- and school-related commute can usually be granted as a transport service for a severely disabled person in cases where the place of work or education facility is located in Helsinki or in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area.

Mobility support granted on the basis of the Social Welfare Act is a transport service and part of the support for independent living. It is primarily intended for the elderly population who, due to their reduced ability to act, cannot use public transport independently or with an escort. Mobility support pursuant to the Social Welfare act is a discretionary benefit tied to income and wealth.

4.2 Personal assistance

The purpose of personal assistance is to help a severely disabled person to live their life and implement their own choices. The condition for granting the assistance is that the person can define the content and implementation method of the necessary assistance they need.

Personal assistance refers to the necessary assistance of a severely disabled person both inside and outside their home:

- with daily chores
- with work and studies
- with hobbies
- with societal participation
- with maintaining social interaction.

Personal assistance includes the matters and tasks that a severely disabled person would do independently if they did not have a disability or illness that limits their capability. The amount and implementation method of the assistance is agreed in the customer's service plan.

Personal assistance is primarily implemented through the so-called employer model, which means that the disabled person chooses their own assistant and enters into an employment agreement with them. The city shall reimburse all the necessary salary costs and other costs caused by the employee. The city uses the Oima programme for paying the salaries of personal assistance.

The city can also grant a service voucher for the purpose of personal assistance, in which case the severely disabled person chooses their personal assistant from companies the city has accepted as service voucher providers. The service voucher of personal assistance is free of charge to customers.

4.3 Apartment alteration work

The aim of alteration work implemented in an apartment is to support the independent living and performance of a disabled person. The apartment alteration work can be reimbursed if the person is severely disabled and the

work is necessary for the person to be able to perform their normal everyday activities. Alteration work shall only be implemented in a permanent apartment and the costs to be reimbursed as a disability service must be reasonable. No alteration work shall be implemented in the apartment of a person needing institutional care.

Recoverable alteration work includes widening doorways, removing thresholds, building ramps, removal of bathtubs, altering fittings, building and interior design materials as well as removing the obstacles in the apartment's immediate vicinity.

4.4 Devices and equipment included in an apartment

Tools and devices belonging to an apartment can be used to facilitate a severely disabled person's independent performance in their home. These include fitted hoists, stairlifts, alarm systems for hearing-impaired people and electric opening systems for front doors. The reasonable costs of tools and devices belonging to an apartment are reimbursed in full.

When deciding on the reimbursement of the tools, attention shall be paid to the person's severe disability and how they manage everyday life in the apartment, alternative solutions, permanence of the apartment, appropriateness of the devices and reasonability of the costs. Usually, the municipality provides the severely disabled person with the tools free of charge. In this case, the municipality is liable for the installation and maintenance costs. If the customer procures a tool or device, they are liable for its possible maintenance and insurance costs.

4.5 Service housing

The service housing for a severely disabled person includes the apartment and services related to living that enable independent living. The service is provided for a severely disabled person who, due to their disability or illness, needs a lot of help in their everyday life, regularly at different times of the day.

The service housing for a severely disabled person can be implemented in the following ways: in the customer's own home, a service housing group or an assisted living facility. Service housing always includes the services necessary for managing everyday life. This can include assistance with movement, getting dressed, personal hygiene, food management and cleaning.

In service housing implemented in the customer's own home, the assistance is often provided as cooperation between the home care and personal assistance pursuant to the Act on Disability Services and Assistance.

Service housing for severely disabled people is also provided in assisted living facilities or group-form housing units as either the city's own service, purchased

service or with service vouchers. The resident pays the rent and all other costs related to everyday life. Service which is necessary due to a disability is free of charge to the customer.

4.6. Day activity

See daytime activities and employment support.

5. Other services pursuant to the Act on Disability Services and Assistance

Some of the services and support measures referred to in the Act on Disability Services and Assistance are tied to appropriations. In this case, being granted the reimbursement is discretionary and depends on factors such as the situation, reasonable costs and available appropriation.

The financial support measures referred to in the Act on Disability Services and Assistance can also be applied for afterwards, within six months of the creation of the costs. However, the most reliable way is to submit an application for financial support measures before the costs to be reimbursed have been created.

5.1 Equipment, machines and devices needed in daily performance

On the basis of the Act on Disability Services and Assistance, the costs of procuring devices, machines and tools necessary for movement, communication or other performance due to a disability can be reimbursed when they are not included in medical rehabilitation. Recoverable things include a car, accessories to be installed in the car or home appliances.

The amount of the reimbursement is at most half of the reasonable procurement costs. The reimbursement of the procurement costs of a car and car accessories have been determined separately. The City of Helsinki only grants an allowance for procuring a car when the car is needed daily, due to things such as commuting, studying or driving a disabled child.

5.2 Adjustment training

Adjustment training can involve counselling, guidance and training. Adjustment training is provided as both individual and group sessions. Disability services include, for example, communication teaching, guidance of orientation and mobility and trial periods of independent living.

The Finnish Social Insurance Institution (Kela), insurance companies and organisations also provide adjustment training.

Adjustment training courses involve enhancing social skills, utilisation of peer support and decreasing the hindrances disability can cause for everyday life.

Adjustment training is free of charge to the participants, excluding the customer's responsibility over the travel expenses.

5.3 Additional clothing costs

Additional clothing costs can be reimbursed as a disability service, in which case the decision is based on individual means-testing. Recoverable costs mainly include tailored clothes, adjustments made to ordinary clothes or unusual wear and tear of clothes caused by a disability or illness.

6. Services pursuant to the Act on Disability Services and Assistance

The services for disabled people are defined in the legislation concerning the special care for disabled people. The purpose of the special care is to promote disabled people's performance in everyday life, their living in and adaption to society as well as to ensure adequate care and treatment. The Act on Disability Services and Assistance emphasises supporting and implementing the right to self-determination.

A person whose development or mental ability is hindered or disordered due to an inborn illness or disability or an illness or disability suffered during adolescence is entitled to apply for services intended for disabled people. The condition is that the person cannot get the services they need on the basis of other legislation.

You become a special care customer by contacting a social worker employed at the disability services of your residential area. The customer will be drafted a special care programme.

A disabled person is also entitled to services pursuant to the Act on Disability Services and Assistance if they are adequate and appropriate for them. The Act on Disability Services and Assistance takes precedence over Act on Special Care for People with Intellectual Disabilities.

6.1 Social work

You can ask social workers for advice, guidance and information about the services. You apply for the services in writing with a disability service application or by talking to a social worker employed at the disability services of your area.

6.2 The Disability Outpatient Clinic

The Disability Outpatient Clinic serves special care customers of all ages who are residents of Helsinki. The Disability Outpatient Clinic offers expertise, research, guidance and counselling related to disability and is responsible for planning rehabilitation. The aim is to promote disabled people's ability to act and to support their participation in society. The services of the Disability Outpatient Clinic are free of charge.

6.3 Granting early childhood education free of charge on the basis of a rehabilitation-related reason

Early childhood education can be granted as a service of special care if it is included as its own section in a comprehensive rehabilitation plan. The decision on early childhood education for rehabilitation-related reasons is applied for and justified with a medical certificate which states the rehabilitative significance that early childhood education has for the customer.

6.4 Afternoon care for school-age children and care during holidays

The education division provides disabled and autistic children attending grades 3–9 of comprehensive school with afternoon care and care during holidays. Actual care is not provided as special care, but if the service is included in the special care programme, it is free of charge. The parents must ensure that the care service is recorded in the special care programme when their child begins third grade.

6.5 Housing services for intellectually disabled people

In Helsinki, there are the city's own housing units and sheltered homes for intellectually disabled people. In addition, housing services are procured as a purchased service from around Helsinki and Finland.

Housing services are provided in group homes, apartment groups, family care and sheltered homes and by supporting independent living. In some of the units, the personnel are present 24/7, and in some others, they are only present during the day. Sheltered homes are separate apartments which the employees visit as agreed, according to the resident's need. In housing services, the customer is charged the rent and meal fee and the cost of electricity, sauna, detergents and laundry room in accordance with their use.

Family care is the provision of care in a family carer's home or the home of the person being cared for. The city concludes a commission agreement with the family carer or concludes an agreement with a provider of private family care concerning the provision of family care.

The City of Helsinki no longer has its own residential care activities for people with disabilities, but some services are procured as purchased services.

Housing service, family care and institutional care can be provided as a short- or long-term service.

6.6 Work and day activities

See daytime activities and employment support.

7. Other services for people with disabilities or chronically ill people

7.1 Informal care allowance

Informal care refers to the provision of care for an elderly, disabled or ill person in the person's own home by a close relative of the person or other person close to them.

The informal care allowance comprises the care fee and statutory days off to be granted to the informal carer.

New customers over the age of 65 apply for the service through the Seniori-info

telephone counselling and those aged under 65 through the locations of disability services social work.

The allowance is applied for with a form, to which you need to attach a medical certificate describing the applicant's ability to act. The application and medical certificate are sent to the disability services social work. After receiving the application for informal care allowance, a social instructor will contact the applicant and visit their home to make a service plan. After this, the instructor will decide on the informal care allowance.

Informal care allowance can be granted, if the person requires, due to reduced ability to act, illness, disability or other similar reason, daily care or other care and the care can be provided in the person's own home. An agreement concerning the informal care allowance is concluded with the informal carer.

7.2 Temporary care

Temporary care is provided on the days the informal carer has off in accordance with the Act on Support for Informal Care. Discretionary temporary care can also be provided. Temporary care is provided in assisted living facilities and in institutional and family care. In informal care, days off can also be organised as a service at the home, as an hourly service with a substitute carer.

Together with the social worker, the customer and their family assess the need for temporary care. Temporary care is subject to a charge confirmed by the Social Services and Health Care Division.

7.3 Support person activities

The service is intended for a disabled person who needs support for creating and maintaining social relationships or to support their independence and development. The aim is to improve the person's opportunities by participating in things such as hobbies and recreational activities. The customer can independently find a support person or ask a social worker for assistance. The support person is paid a fee and compensation for expenses.

7.4 Social guidance

If necessary, social instructors employed at disability services provide support and guidance for disabled persons of all ages living at home and their families. Social instructors support disabled people in matters related to the management of everyday life, work, free time and relationships. Social guidance is planned and usually fixed-term work to support the customer's independent life.

7.5 Daytime activities and employment support

7.5.1 Day activities pursuant to the Act on Disability Services and Assistance

Day activities are provided for severely disabled people of working age (under the age of 65) who cannot participate in work activity provided under the Social Welfare Act and whose income is mainly based on benefits granted on the grounds of an illness or incapacity for work.

The objective of the daytime activities is to support physical and psychological well-being and to promote social interaction and participation in community and society. Daytime activities include peer support and support for living at home, it can also support close relatives' capacity to continue and decrease the need for other care.

The content of daytime activities is adjusted according to the customers' needs and ability to act. The locations of daytime activities usually have lunch facilities. The customers are charged for the meals and trips.

7.5.2 Work and day activities for the intellectually disabled

Work and day activities for the intellectually disabled become an option once compulsory school attendance has ended.

In activities promoting participation, the customer is encouraged to join in with society in their surrounding area as its equal citizen. The activity is about supporting self-expression, self-determination and interaction and training skills required for being an independent adult.

Activities promoting participation on working life trains the customer for working life. Customer- and goal-oriented activities promoting a customer's participation are provided as group guidance. In addition to group guidance, individual work training with the aim of becoming gainfully employed is also provided.

Adult education and preparatory education are activities supporting young people's and adults' independence and preparation for further education and working life.

7.5.3 Subsidised employment service

Subsidised employment service strives for its customers becoming gainfully employed. The requirements for receiving the service are being a Helsinki resident over the age of 18 and being either intellectually disabled or on the

autism spectrum or having some other neuropsychiatric diagnosis or other disability.

Work training includes surveying and developing the preparedness for working life, finding a job together with the customer, supporting the orientation in the workplace and support visits agreed with the employer. The training is tailored to the person and its objective is always the customer becoming employed. Depending on the customer's preparedness, they can either become employed immediately or through a work try-out. Further information can be requested from your local social work unit for disabled services or directly at the Subsidised Employment Service, tel. 310 69597.

7.5.4 Supporting employment and social rehabilitation

The employment service of the Social Services and Health Care are intended for the long-term unemployed and partially disabled people. The purpose of the service is to support well-being, life management and ability to act and for work. Sometimes, the options also include the assessment of the ability for work and referring the customer to rehabilitation or pension. You can apply for the service by contacting the joint employment service Helsinki TYP or the service point for adult social work in your residential area.

7.6 Customer charge reduction or non-enforcement

The customer charge can be reduced or it can be left unenforced if the payment would weaken the conditions for the customer's livelihood (Section 11, Act on Customer Charges in Health Care and Social Welfare).

Charge reduction or non-enforcement can be applied for with a freeform application. It, including its income and expenditure receipts, must be delivered to the unit of customer charges and collection. The income and expenditure receipts must cover the previous two months. It is recommended to draft a summary of all income and expenditure and attach it to the application.

The application must state for which period of time or from which date onwards the charge reduction or non-enforcement is being applied for and which service the application concerns. The maximum period of time for which the charge reduction or non-enforcement can be applied for is 12 months.

The decision on the charge reduction or non-enforcement is mainly made from the start of the application month. Charge reduction or non-enforcement cannot be applied for retrospectively and no individual unpaid invoice can be eliminated.

The customer must have been regularly on income support or otherwise insolvent for over 6 months in order to be eligible for customer charge reduction or non-enforcement.

8. Other services for people with disabilities or chronically ill people

8.1 Kela benefits

Information about Kela benefits is available at <https://www.kela.fi/web/en/disability>

Disability benefits include the disability allowance for children under 16 years old, disability allowance for those over 16 years old and the care allowance for pensioners. Person participating in the rehabilitation can be paid rehabilitation allowance or young person's rehabilitation allowance. Through Kela, you can apply for diverse rehabilitation for persons who need it due to a disability or illness. The EU Disability Card can also be applied for at Kela.

The Kela service also includes an interpretation service for hearing-impaired people, visually and hearing-impaired people and speech-impaired people who, due to their disability, require interpretation. Interpretation is also provided as a remote service.

8.2 Disabled person's parking permit and exemption from the basic tax of the vehicle tax

The parking permit of a disabled person is personal. The permit can be granted if the requirements are met on the basis of a medical statement. The permit can be used for the vehicle in which the permit holder is a driver or passenger. The parking permit is valid in all Member States of the European Union. You can also apply for an exemption from the basic tax of the vehicle tax. Further information is available on the Traficom website at www.traficom.fi/en > Applying for a parking card for people with reduced mobility and tax exemption.

8.3 Car tax refund

A disabled person or their close relatives can receive a car tax refund for a car that intended for the disabled person's personal use or driving a disabled family member and which is registered in Finland for the first time.

The refund must be applied for within six months of the car being registered in the name of the disabled person. The decision can be applied for even before procuring or registering the car. Further information is available on the Finnish Tax Administration's website at www.vero.fi (in Finnish).

8.4 Special swimming card

A special swimming card is granted to disabled or chronically ill Helsinki residents for the purpose of independent swimming. The swimming card is valid for all indoor and outdoor swimming pools in Helsinki and the validity period is one year, starting from the date of purchase. Further information is available on the Culture and Leisure Division's website at www.hel.fi/en > Culture and Leisure > Sports > Indoor > Swimming.

Locations of social work for disabled people

Telephone counselling for the disabled Mon–Fri from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. and on Tue and Thu from 12 noon to 2 p.m. 09 310 32889.

Swedish-language counselling Wed from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. tel. 09 310 35154. At other times, you can leave a contact request on the answering machine or by sending an SMS message. You can also contact the counselling service for the disabled by sending a message to sote.vammaisneuvonta@hel.fi

Service point for the counselling for the disabled

Itäkatu family centre, Tallinnanaukio 1, 00930 Helsinki, 1st floor
Wednesdays from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. You do not need an appointment for the counselling for the disabled; reporting to the caretaker is enough.

Office secretaries' service number Mon–Fri from 8:15 a.m. to 3 p.m. tel. 09 310 23100 (transport service payment cards, matter related to transport profiles and service vouchers).

Customers (under 18 years old) of the eastern and northern area

Itäkatu family centre
P.O. Box 6730, 00099 City of Helsinki
Itäkatu 11, 00930 Helsinki

Customers (under 18 years old) of the southern and western area and all the Swedish-speaking customers of the entire city

Kallio family centre
P.O. Box 6450, 00099 City of Helsinki
Toinen linja 4 C, 00530 Helsinki

Disabled and intellectually disabled customers (over 18 years old) of the southern area and disabled customers of the eastern area

Southern location of social work for disabled people
Kalasatama health and well-being centre
P.O. Box 6420, 00099 City of Helsinki
Työpajankatu 14, 6th floor, 00580 Helsinki

Customers (aged over 18) of disability services in the eastern area

Eastern location of social work for disabled people
P.O. Box 6250, 00099 City of Helsinki
Kahvikuja 3, 00980 Helsinki

Disabled and intellectually disabled customers (over 18 years old)

Western and northern locations of social work for disabled people
P.O. Box 7980, 00099 City of Helsinki
Ala-Malmin tori 2, 00700 Helsinki

Helsinki

**City of Helsinki
Social Services and
Health Care Division**

Toinen linja 4
00530 Helsinki
PO Box 6000
00099 City of Helsinki
+358 (0)9 310 5015

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